Met Office

NEWS

Change on the way

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Milder, wet and windy weather is expected to sweep into the UK on Sunday marking the end of the current cold spell, however this will be preceded by some wintry hazards.

The marked change in weather type may herald only a temporary reprieve though. There is the possibility of colder weather for some again next week, although not as cold as we have been experiencing of late. With this we could potentially see a return of some wintery hazards, mainly across the north, as well as generally unsettled conditions more widely with strong winds which could prove disruptive early next week.

A number of yellow National Severe Weather warnings for snow, ice and wind are either in place or are likely to be issued over the coming days. The UK will remain cold into the weekend with the risk of sleet and snow at times continuing mainly across northern areas.

Met Office Deputy Chief Forecaster, Helen Caughey, said: "The northerly airflow and cold conditions which have dominated our weather patterns over the last 10 days will start to lose ground to a push of mild air from the southwest on Sunday.

"As the mild air meets the cold air currently *in situ* over the UK there will be a transient spell of snow, potentially to low levels, especially in the north. Add to this the risk of rain falling onto frozen surfaces, and strong winds over upland areas of northern Britain, bringing blizzard conditions, and this could be a day to avoid travelling in some areas, although the snow should turn to rain later."

"There is also a brief risk of a period of freezing rain, most likely to impact areas from the Pennines northwards, which could result in some power interruptions.

"It will remain unsettled next week. Strong winds could prove disruptive at times especially through the first half of the week and there is the possibility of some persistent rain for parts of the southwest. Although not as cold as we are currently experiencing, we could potentially see a return of some wintery hazards at times, mainly across higher ground in the north, but there is still a lot of uncertainty in how prolonged this might be and what associated hazards it might bring.

"The unsettled picture for next week means, that although Christmas is just a week away, it is still not possible to say with any certainty if we will have a white Christmas Day or not."

A Level 3 Cold Weather Alert has been issued by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) covering all of England and is currently in place until midnight on Sunday 18th December.

Cold-weather advice

Peter Jenkins, Director of Campaigns at Water UK, said: "The recent freezing weather has been very disruptive to many people. The last thing we want is for people to experience further disruption as temperatures rise this weekend, putting many homes at risk of burst pipes due to freeze-thaw.

"That's why we're urging everyone to check their water pipes are well insulated now, and to follow our simple tips to protect homes against weather conditions. If you're concerned about the impact of freeze-thaw or the cold weather, we encourage you to get in touch with your water company for further help and advice."

There is lots of advice on the Met Office website on cold weather. Dr Agostinho Sousa, Consultant in Public Health Medicine at UKHSA, said: "Cold weather can have serious consequences for health, and older people and those with heart or lung conditions can be particularly at risk.

“If you have a pre-existing medical condition, you should heat your home to a temperature that is comfortable for you. In rooms you mostly use such as the living room or bedroom, try to heat them to at least 18°C if you can. Keep your bedroom windows closed at night. Wearing several layers of clothing will keep you warmer than one thicker layer.”

Dale Hipkiss, National Network Manager at National Highways, said: “During winter weather, keeping a kit of essential items like a torch and warm clothes, in your vehicle, can be vital in case you and your passengers become stranded. Freezing conditions bring so many hazards such as snow and ice and take every possible step to understand your journey in advance and allow lots of extra time when travelling to prepare for the unexpected.

“It is therefore always important to plan ahead for your journey, listen to the weather forecasts, and if weather conditions become challenging, adjust your driving behaviour and take extra care.

“We have a section of our website dedicated to travelling during the autumn and winter period, as part of our guide to travelling in severe weather. It’s also a good idea for people to check their vehicles, such as tyres, coolant and oil levels, before heading out to reduce the risk of breakdowns.”

National Highways has lots of advice on its website around travelling in severe weather conditions, including high winds and gales, fog, rain and snow and ice. Visit our travelling in severe weather web page.

You can find information and advice from Traffic Scotland around travelling in severe weather on their 'Are you ready for Winter' web page.

You can check the latest forecast on our website, by following us on Twitter and Facebook, as well as on our mobile app which is available for iPhone from the App store and for Android from the Google Play store. Keep track of current weather warnings on the weather warning page.

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